

September 15, 1944

1.913 ✓ A 4-H DEMONSTRATION IN LAND USE AND SOIL CONSERVATION /1
F3F829
Reserve (An account of land-use and conservation activities of the 4-H Clubs of Mississippi)

By Gertrude L. Warren /2

The Background

In Mississippi during the past several years there has been an awakening to the needs for soil conservation and soil building on the part of farm people. Many farm boys and girls have become especially interested in such needs as their attention has been called to eroded slopes, the poor soil remaining, and the relatively low incomes resulting. This increasing awareness of conditions on the part of rural young people has been due largely to conversations around the family table, news items in local papers, local broadcasts, and attendance at farm meetings where the needs for soil conservation and soil building have been discussed. In addition, some of those most responsible for the State land use and conservation program have believed that 4-H Club boys could do much in stimulating interest and action on the part of farming communities through their own 4-H demonstration work. To this end work in developing 4-H Club programs in land use and conservation was started in 1936 by the assistant State 4-H Club leader of Mississippi in cooperation with the assistant agricultural engineer for soil conservation.

Plan of Procedure

At the beginning of the club year, when the boys of a community meet to discuss what they wish to take up as a 4-H Club project, the needs of the community and of their own farm are discussed. Naturally, the need for a soil-building program is given attention. Boys who wish to undertake such a project then enroll formally for the work.

Each member of a 4-H Club is taught to make a plane table map of his farm, showing conditions at the start of the program and then, each year thereafter, to show the changes effected. These maps not only afford valuable training for the boy but are themselves helpful in formulating detailed plans for these programs.

To carry out the various phases of land use, the 4-H member may use any portion of his farm in excess of 10 acres. In the beginning a number of club members used small project areas of 10 to 15 acres, but now the entire farm usually is included. Use of the entire acreage of the farm seems to be the most practical procedure, since in this way a more thorough and comprehensive program can be developed. Use of the whole farm serves also to stimulate the interest of the club member's father without which little could be accomplished.

Participation in 4-H terracing-club work is a prerequisite to, or must be carried on in conjunction with, 4-H land use work the first year. Because of

- /1 One of a series of case histories prepared for use in The Conference To Outline the Contribution of Extension Methods and Techniques Toward the Rehabilitation of War-torn Countries, held in Washington, D. C., September 19 to 22, 1944. Extension Service and Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations cooperating.
- /2 Organization, 4-H Club Work.

the nature of the awards in the form of college scholarships, the project record of each member constitutes a progressive report and becomes complete when he is ready for college. The record must cover a period of at least 2 full years' work. However, the 4-H phase of the work may be continued for each member until he is 21 years of age.

Another feature of this club which insures its continuation on each farm over a long period of years is, that younger brothers may become members in succession and carry on the work until all have left the home farm for college or elsewhere; or, when they do not go away, they may carry on the work as 4-H Club members until they are 21, and as older members until they are 30.

Due to the importance of soil erosion control in Mississippi, the number one land-use measure incorporated in these 4-H demonstrations has been an adequate system of terraces. Since this system of terraces not only conserves both soil and moisture, but establishes the pattern for farmstead arrangements, it is considered a prerequisite to other practices where erosion is a serious problem. Therefore, the engineering phases of the work are considered primary and fundamental.

Following the necessary mechanical erosion control measures which the 4-H Club boys learn and incorporate themselves, the other land-use and soil-building practices consistent with the farm needs are added. In this way soil-conservation and land-use practices are incorporated in an orderly manner to insure permanency. 4-H land-use demonstrators in Mississippi are doing their part to conserve their soils for posterity while producing food crops for consumption here and overseas.

What Happened

Because the scope of the work is broad and requires above-average intelligence and close supervision, the growth of these 4-H Clubs has been rather slow, but steady and far-reaching nevertheless. The 4-H land-use conservation clubs for boys of Mississippi were first organized in 1936. In 1937, 4-H demonstrations were conducted in four counties. In 1938, two more counties were added. Interest increased, and in 1939 seven other counties added this phase of conservation to their programs of work. In 1940, five new counties took up the work followed the next year by 22 counties, in which demonstrations were conducted involving 2,891 acres. This past year the work was under way in 23 counties involving 7,480 acres. The large increase in acreage was brought about partly by the enlargement of scope by the boys already in the work. Practically all of these boys are now working their entire farms. Inclusion of the whole farm has increased the member's interest in his project.

Four counties have set up 4-H land-use associations, incorporated them under charter of the Agricultural Association laws of Mississippi, and are carrying on a cooperative program of conservation through wise land use. These junior organizations are receiving the backing of their county, district, and State extension workers as well as of other agricultural agencies.

The Tennessee Valley Authority, acting under its agreement with the Mississippi Extension Service, is cooperating with these 4-H land-use members and feels that the boys are offering sound, fundamental farm and home demonstrations through these projects.

In the opinion of the assistant county agent of Pearl River County, this is one of the finest 4-H Club projects a boy can carry out. It was discussed with

boys who were considered suitable prospects for this project. Those boys whose fathers owned small farms consisting of 15 to 25 acres and were working away from home and depending on their sons to do a major portion of the farm work, were considered the best prospects for this particular project. Of the 32 boys chosen as suitable prospects, 16 have pledged to carry out a land-use project on their farms. A special 4-H conference was held for these boys with those in charge, who assisted in instructing and showing the boys the purposes of a land-use project. Twelve of the boys were able to attend this conference. They discussed freely the problems on their own farms and felt much better able to carry on after their attendance at this meeting. When they arrived home they discussed what they had learned with their parents. At their next club meeting, they made a report of the conference so that the other boys might benefit also.

W. A. Walker of Magee, Simpson County, Miss., completed his second year of this project last year. He has constructed approximately 30 acres of terraces and put out 5 acres of pine-tree seedlings. This boy was awarded a trip to the conservation school along with Donald Hough another land-use boy. Hough has terraced approximately 50 acres of land with charged pasture fence. At the school, these two boys studied the different phases of land-use adapted to their projects.

Miller Flowers of Pleasant Ridge Community had been carrying on his 4-H land-use work in a fair way, but was letting his maps of the farm go. However, in the early spring he really started work again. Miller's father was interested and helped when he could. This year Miller set out six acres of kudzu, cleared off about 16 acres of pasture, seeded and fertilized some of this pasture, set out 4,000 pine-tree seedlings, replanned all terraces, constructed and sodded a permanent outlet, did some work in woodland, planted one-half of the cropland to winter cover crops, and changed some of the fencing.

A plane table map of the entire farm was made at the beginning of this work, and another each year to show the changes made. Miller won one of the two \$400 scholarships offered by Sears, Roebuck and Co. in the 4-H land-use contest. At present Miller is taking advantage of the scholarship and attending Mississippi State College. He had started to attend Junior College at Ellisville, but without the scholarship it would have been impossible for him to have gone to Mississippi State College.

